

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Alcester-Hudson School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003**

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left not addressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Southeast Area Cooperative A Special Education Handbook for Teachers and Administrators
- Alcester-Hudson School District 61-1 Comprehensive Plan for Special Education

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded that the district has an effective child find system. The pre-referral process includes staff communication with parents. The district has no private school within its boundaries; however, the Alcester-Hudson School District's Comprehensive Plan addresses policy and procedures that would insure the provision of special education and related services to a student(s) at a private school. In addition, the steering committee concluded the district has policies in place for employing or contracting personnel who are licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities. Alcester-Hudson District employees annually complete a needs assessment, and the Southeast Area Cooperative provides an in-service at the beginning of the school year based on the employee's assessment results. The steering committee also noted that the district has had no suspensions or expulsions within the past three years.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The district's collaboration with the community to have a public library at the high school was determined to be a promising practice by the monitoring team that was not identified by the steering committee. The team noted that after school dismissal, several students were in the library reading books/magazines and using the computers.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated the steering committee's conclusion that areas under the principle General Supervision meet the requirements.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Alcester-Hudson School District Comprehensive Plan for Special Education

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded the district provides a free appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. They also concluded that should a child with disabilities be suspended or expelled from school for more than ten days, the student would be provided with a free appropriate public education as stated in Section X, page 78, #11 of the district's comprehensive plan.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agreed that the district meets the regulations for providing free appropriate public education to children with disabilities.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input, conducts a comprehensive evaluation. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Parent surveys
- Special Education Handbook for Teachers and Administrators
- Excent

Meets Requirements

The steering committee found that all of the parents' who returned surveys indicated their child's test results were used to help plan the Individualized Education Plan. In addition, they concluded that input was gathered for determination of needed evaluations and evaluation data is used to determine when a student no longer requires Special Education services.

Needs Improvement

Parent participation/input into the evaluation planning process, parent consent, comprehensive evaluations and parents receiving copies of evaluations were determined by the steering committee as needing improvement. Also, the committee determined improvement was needed in explaining evaluation results to parents. In addition, the steering committee noted that no independent education evaluations were on file, but the district has policies to address an IEE.

Out of Compliance

The steering committee concluded evaluations were not always completed within the 25-school day or the three-year reevaluation timelines.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agreed that evaluation data is used when a student's IEP team determines dismissal of a student from Special Education services. Parent consent was found for all initial evaluations. Because the district's comprehensive plan addresses policies and procedures for an independent educational evaluation, the team concluded this was not an area needing improvement.

Documentation of attempts to get parent consent for reevaluation was not found by the team to need improvement. During a file review with a special education teacher, a reevaluation was identified as not having consent. It did, however, contain documentation of attempts to gain consent as required by administrative rule.

Out of Compliance

The monitoring team validated the steering committee's finding that the 25 school-day evaluation and three-year reevaluation timelines consistently did not meet requirements.

ARSD 24:05:04:02 Determination of Needed Evaluation Data

A team of individuals, including input from the student's parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs. In interviews with the special education instructors, the team concluded the district sometimes received verbal parent input into the evaluation; however, the staff was not aware that documentation of the parent input was required.

ARSD 24:05:30:17 Prior Notice Consent to Evaluate

The monitoring team found in seven of the thirteen files reviewed the students were not evaluated in all areas that had been written on the prior notice; for example, hearing and vision evaluations were written on the prior notice, but no vision evaluation was given. One file did not contain the prior notice/consent documentation for a dismissal of a student from speech/language services, however, the IEP addendum indicated the team did review evaluation information prior to the student's dismissal. In addition, functional evaluations were not administered for any of the students evaluated.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child. The team concluded through file reviews and staff interviews that functional assessments were not being completed for development of the IEP. The staff was not aware that functional assessment information is to be used for determining the student's disability, present levels of performance and the development of measurable annual goals and short-term objectives/benchmarks.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Parental rights brochure
- District Comprehensive Plan for Special Education
- The Special Education Handbook for Teachers and Administrators
- Prior notice forms
- Table L
- Table M
- Surveys
- File reviews

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded the district's parental rights brochure contains all needed data, and it is updated yearly to reflect any mandated changes. The parental rights brochure is sent

with all prior notices. The forms used by the district contain all of the necessary components. The steering committee also determined that parents are fully informed in their native language of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. Consent was received for evaluations in which services were provided in all but one of the files reviewed.

In addition, the steering committee concluded the district's comprehensive plan for special education, the parental rights brochure and the special education handbook from the Southeast Area Cooperative contain the procedures the district would follow if there were a need for surrogate parents for a child.

From Table M data of the State Data and file information, the steering committee concurred that there have been no due process hearing requests in the district.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee identified the district's policies and procedures being in place for the inspection and review of educational records as an area needing improvement.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements.

In file reviews, interviews and reference to Tables L and M data, the monitoring team concluded that the Alcester-Hudson District meets the procedural safeguards requirements. Also, the team determined the district does have policies and procedures in place for inspection and review of students' educational records in accordance with regulations.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Parent surveys
- Special Education Handbook for Teachers and Administrators

Promising Practice

Through file reviews, the steering committee determined that policies and procedures are followed to provide quite a good service in the area of Individualized Education Programs.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee concluded the district needs to improve inviting transition age students and outside agencies to IEP meetings. They also found transition assessments were not always used to determine the student's interests and skills for his/her transition plan.

The steering committee found administration personnel were not present at several IEP meetings.

In addition, the steering committee concluded that present levels of performance did not always have documentation of parental input and functional assessment information.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitors concluded that providing following policies and procedures to ensure appropriate service in the area of individualized education programs is a requirement.

Needs Improvement

Through file reviews and interviews, the review team agreed that there is a need to improve the consistent documentation of invitations to outside agencies to attend IEP meetings for student's 16 years and older. In interviews, the monitoring team found that outside agencies were not invited when the student planned to be employed in the family business.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:27.01.01-IEP Team

A student's IEP team must include an administrator or designee who:

- a. Is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specifically designed instruction to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities;
- b. Is knowledgeable about the general curriculum; and,
- c. Is knowledgeable about the availability of resources in the school district.

In four of thirteen files reviewed, an administrator or designee did not sign as a participant at the IEP meeting.

ARSD 24:05:27.13.02 Transition Services

For each student beginning at the age of fourteen or younger if determined appropriate by the placement committee, must be invited to his/her IEP meeting. Also, the IEP is to have a statement of the transition service needs based on the student's interests and assessment information that correlates with the student's course of study. The monitoring team found five of the six transition age students' files had "electives" rather than specific courses to meet the students' needs. Also, the students' IEP did not consistently indicate who was responsible to carry out the objectives or the dates when the transition activities would be initiated or completed.

ARSD 24:05:27.01.03 Content of Individualized Education Plan

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based on the skill areas affected by the student's disability. The present levels of performance should be a reflection of the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation and include parental input. Parent input was not consistently included in the present levels of performance. The thirteen student files reviewed did not have present levels of performance linked to functional assessment information. In addition, transition was not addressed in the present levels of performance in six transition-age students' files. In interviews, the special education teachers' said they did not know this information is a requirement.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

File reviews

Surveys

Special Education Handbook for Teachers and Administrators

Promising Practice

The steering committee concluded that the teachers, along with the assistance of educational aids, are able to modify teaching in the classroom to meet the needs of children with disabilities. If necessary, the child receives more specialized attention in a specific area in the Resource Room.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The monitoring team concluded through staff interviews and observations that a promising practice was the district's employment of six paraprofessionals, which insures students are educated in the least restrictive environment.

Meets Requirements

A monitor observed in the elementary school classrooms that the district provides needed assistive technology. Also, during observations at the high school, a monitor observed that modifications were being followed. Students' with disabilities were seated near the front of the classroom where there were fewer distractions, and the teacher could monitor the students' note taking.

The monitoring team validated that the district meets the Least Restrictive Environment requirements for children in need of special education and related services.